00399

1965/05/03

May 3, 1965

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

You may have seen in the morning news that the Cambodians have broken diplomatic relations with us Our people are not surprised. The initial recommendation for a prompt apology on the accidental air attack was based on a hope that it might marginally affect this Cambodian decision, but my own judgment is that relations were about to break anyway. Moreover, it is good that the Cambodians have put the burden equally on NEWSWEEK and on the air attacks.

This Cambodian decision makes a proposed apology irrelevant. We will deal with the air matter by saying that it is still under investigation. We will further say that this break of relations does not affect our position on a Cambodian conference (we have no relations at all with North Vietnam and China, who would also be in such a conference). Finally, we will say that we are still reviewing the question whether we wish to keep a consulate in Phnom Penh, which the Cambodians have apparently suggested

More generally, if we get any flak on this air accident, now or later, we will point out in reply that Cambodia has provided a variety of facilities for the Viet Cong over a long period of time and is therefore in a poor position to criticize a single Air Force error, however tragic it is for those who were hit.

McG. B.